

## **Stages and Iowa Alternate Assessment**

### **OVERVIEW**

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances Iowa's special education assessment because:

- 1. Stages aligns with the Iowa Alternate Assessment Skill Sets in Mathematics and Reading.**
- 2. Stages generates primary evidence of learner performance for the learner's IEP portfolio.**
- 3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
- 4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

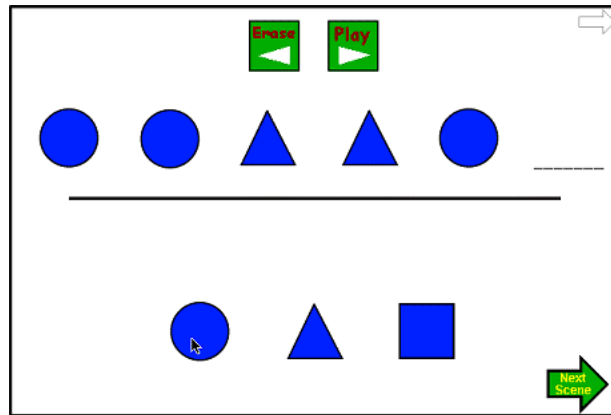
#### **1. Stages aligns with the Iowa Alternate Assessment Skill Sets in Mathematics and Reading.**

The content covered in Stages activities includes mathematics and reading topics at a range of levels. Please refer to the section, "How Stages Correlates with Iowa Alternate Assessment," for detailed matching. The learner's IEP team can also use Stages to help determine if alternate assessment is appropriate by providing informal benchmarks of learner progress in Mathematics and Reading.

#### **2. Stages generates primary evidence of learner performance for the learner's IEP portfolio.**

During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product as a benchmark. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructor may wish to then print that screen, save the screenshot, or save the information as a text-format electronic file as examples of student work for portfolio evidence collection.

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

**3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include real-life community settings.

**4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables.

## SUMMARY

Stages augments the Iowa alternate assessment cycle. The Stages software is a comprehensive benchmark tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable information on learner skill achievement, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

## How Stages Correlates with Iowa Alternate Assessment<sup>1</sup>

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### Mathematics Skill Sets Sample Extended Benchmarks

#### Skill Set 1: Problem solving

Reacts to objects/activities, and/or interactions by displaying some observable change in behavior (in all **Skill Sets**).  
Explores mathematics materials (objects, manipulatives, calculator, abacus - in all **Skill Sets**).  
Differentiates/discriminates between various objects (also in **Skill Sets 2, 3, and 5-9**).

##### **Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Activities in every Stage provide the learner with opportunities to attend to spoken, written, or multisensory instructions. The observation forms at each Stage guide the instructor systematically record the learner's behavioral response to each activity.

*Stage One:* All Activities  
*Stage Three:* All Activities  
*Stage Six:* All 'Explore' Activities

- Stage One includes short animations to determine the learner's ability to attend to an activity and use an appropriate input device. The activities present a visual, auditory, or multisensory prompt that encourages the learner to continue activating the device.
- Stage Three gives the learner an opportunity to independently choose desired activities and responses to questions.
- Stage Six *Explore* activities give the learner an opportunity to use an input device to select items on the screen to hear and/or read information about it.

Expresses "more" (also in **Skill Set 2**).

##### **Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Four:* Math Readiness: Estimating  
*Stage Five:* Problem Solving: Number Guess

- Stage Four *Estimating* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of relative quantity vocabulary such as 'less/more' or 'big/medium/small.'
- Stage Five *Number Guess* asks the learner to deduce a mystery number by entering guesses according to feedback about its relative value, such as "That number is too high." The range of numbers may be set for varying levels of difficulty by the instructor.

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<sup>1</sup> Information from Eligibility Criteria for the Iowa Alternate Assessment (Web page) and Alternate Assessment Implementation Manual used for alternate assessment training workshops held in January 2002 by the office of Children, Family and Community Services, Iowa Department of Education.  
Sources: <http://www.ksde.org/assessment/eligibilitycriteria2112699.htm> and [www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/cfcs/idea/doc/iaaim.pdf](http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/cfcs/idea/doc/iaaim.pdf) (Accessed July 22, 2002).

Directs and sustains attention to activities involving numbers (also in **Skill Sets 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9**).

Use objects or pictures to represent numbers 0-50.

Imitates actions in mathematics activities (e.g., counting objects - also in **Skill Sets 2, 3, 6, 7, 9**).

Count objects with correspondence (also in **Skill Sets 2, 3, 6, 7, 9**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Four:* Math Readiness: Number ID, Counting

- Counting includes an accessible number line and pictures as virtual manipulatives. The number of objects ranges from 1 to 10. Stage Four Number ID includes numbers from 0 to 10 for the learner to explore and then identify in the context of a telephone keypad and an elevator.

Use concrete materials or pictures to demonstrate whole and parts (also in **Skill Set 2**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Five:* Math: Fraction ID, Fraction Application

- Stage Five *Fraction ID* asks the learner to select the fraction that illustrates the ratio of selected pictures on the screen in relation to the total number of objects on the screen. The multiple choice questions ask the learner to distinguish fractions with like and unlike denominators. *Fraction Application* asks the learner to identify the correct number of sections of a whole object to represent a fraction or a fractional solution to a word problem.

**Skill Set 2 Critical Function: Number concepts**

Uses concrete materials to add, subtract (also in **Skill Set 3, 9**).

Identifies symbols such as numbers and signs (also in **Skill Set 1**: Uses symbols; and **Skill Sets 3, 9**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Five:* Math: Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- Math Facts* includes addition and subtraction with and without regrouping; multiplication of two-single-digit numbers; and division of single- and double-digit numbers without remainders.
- Word Problems* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of each of the four operations with and without diagrams on the screen illustrating repeated addition or partitioning of sets.

Matches numbers and symbols (also in **Skill Set 3, 9**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Four:* Math Readiness: Number ID

- The learner identifies numerals after listening while the number is spoken and/or text is displayed.

**Skill Set 4 Critical Function: Measurement**

Directs and sustains attention to activities involving measurement.

Imitates actions in mathematics activities (measuring).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Five:* Math: Explore Geometry

- Stage Five *Explore Geometry* gives the learner an overview of the concepts of perimeter, area, and volume with the help of on-screen diagrams. The learner progresses through each activity screen using an appropriate input device.

Compare and order by size (e.g., large/small; heavy/light).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Estimating

- The learner can explore and demonstrate ability to discern relative quantities of objects in the context of scenes.

Relate time to daily activities.

Tells time to the hour.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Six: Stories: Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

Explore and Assess: Telling Time

- Stage Six *Stories* present the learner with short passages about people doing realistic activities such as recreation and travel. Time, money, community signs and clothing are included in the details of each passage so that the learner can relate these concepts to daily living. *Telling Time (Assess)* includes digital and analog clocks and photographs to relate questions to real scenarios. Learners click on clocks to hear and read the time displayed in the *Explore* section.

Identifies coins by value.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Six: Assess: Counting Money, Money Equivalents

- The *Money* activities present the learner with questions that include photographs illustrating scenes from each of the Stage Six *Stories* activities. Coins up to \$0.25 and bills up to \$20 are included.

**Skill Set 5 Critical Function: Shape and dimensionality**

Directs and sustains attention to activities involving shapes and dimensionality.

Explores mathematics materials (objects, two and three dimensional shapes).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Four: Explore: Shape ID

- The learner explores by using an input device to select triangles, rectangles, circles, squares, and ovals.

Differentiates/discriminates between shapes.

Matches shapes triangle, circle, square.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Four: Assess: Shape ID

- The learner demonstrates recognition of triangles, rectangles, circles, squares, and ovals in photographs and drawings in scenes and in isolation (blank background).

Counts the sides of the geometric shapes.

Sort and classify shapes.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Mystery Shape

- Stage Five *Mystery Shape* applies the learner's knowledge of shape attributes to a deductive reasoning game.

**Skill Set 6 Critical Function: Data analysis**

Compare bars on a graph, identify which has “more.”

***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Five:*      *Math:* Charts and Graphs

- The Stage Five *Charts and Graphs* activity includes bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts. Familiar topics such as favorite snacks and animals help make the activities engaging for the learner.

**Skill Set 8 Critical Function: Patterns and equations**

Imitates patterns.

Extends patterns using concrete objects, movement, sound.

***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Four:*      *Math Readiness:* Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

- Stage Four *Patterns* activities introduce the learner to patterns using shapes, color, and sound, have them continue patterns, and allow them to generate their own patterns.

## Reading Skill Sets Sample Extended Benchmarks

**Sample Extended Benchmarks common to all three Skill Sets:**

**Skill Set 1 - Reading skills and strategies**

**Skill Set 2 - Reads and enjoys literature**

**Skill Set 3 - Reads for information**

Attends to people & objects in the environment (facial expression, eye gaze, reaching, other physical response).

***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage One: Press and Hold, Press and Release*

- Stage One activities are simple animations activated by an appropriate input device. The learner demonstrates control of the number of presses or clicks in *Press and Release*. *Press and Hold* activities allow the learner to show control of the length of presses.

Displays an interest in literacy materials (graphic, written, auditory, tactile).

Attends to pictures/objects when presented.

Attends to the person and reading materials in a purposeful manner.

Directs and sustains attention to a listening/reading activity.

Displays effect appropriate for story/information/directions.

***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Two: Nouns, Verbs, Attributes*

*Stage Five: Reading: Meaning*

*Stage Six: Stories: Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan*

*Explore and Assess: Recognizing Signs*

- Stage Two activities expose the learner to vocabulary using familiar objects such as animals and vehicles at three different levels of graphic abstraction: photograph, drawing, and symbol (from the Mayer-Johnson PCS libraries).
- Stage Five *Meaning* presents the learner with Dolch words. The learner selects the picture in a scene that illustrates the meaning of the word.
- Stage Six *Stories* are self-paced activities with short passages about real people performing activities of daily living. The learner can follow text on the screen as it is spoken (Multisensory) or read silently (Visual). The instructor can make note of the learner's behavior during the activity.

Follows verbal/signed directions.

***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Five: All 'Explore' Activities*

*All Stages Activities*

- In Stage Five *Explore* activities, the learner attends to verbal and written instructions in order to learn how to solve problems or explore new vocabulary.
- Stages Activities that require learner input provide options for text (visual), spoken (auditory), or text-with voiceover (multisensory) prompting and/or feedback.

Identifies symbols (e.g., letters/graphics/Braille/objects).

***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Four: Reading Readiness: Letter ID, Letter Sounds*

- The learner explores and demonstrates mastery of consonants and vowels and their sounds with the help of simple, yet engaging animated rewards. *Letter ID* asks the learner to identify upper-case and lower-case letters. *Letter Sounds* asks the learner to distinguish similar-sounding letters.

Matches pictures to words.  
Answers specific questions.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Three:* Levels of Representation, Object Identification, Category Identification, Function Identification

*Stage Five:* Reading: Meaning

- Stage Three activities extend the vocabulary learned in Stage Two. The learner chooses the correct illustration when presented with nouns, verbs, and categories of objects.
- Stage Five *Meaning* presents the learner with Dolch words. The learner selects the picture in a scene that illustrates the meaning of the word.

**Sample Extended Benchmarks for individual Skill Sets:**

Reads logos/survival words/directional words (e.g., picture recipes/informational text - **Skill Sets 1, 3**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Four:* Math Readiness: Spatial Relationships

*Stage Six:* Explore and Assess: Recognizing Signs

- Stage Four *Spatial Relationships* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of relative location vocabulary such as 'up/down' or 'behind/in front.'
- *Recognizing Signs* presents the learner with community signs to identify in the context of a realistic scenario.

Identifies printed words within sentences or text (**Skill Set 1**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Seven:* Making Words: Copy Words

- Using *Copy Words*, the learner can demonstrate the ability to write their own name using an appropriate device. The learner can type it after it is spoken, or copy it while looking at an example.

Uses decoding strategies to identify unfamiliar words (**Skill Set 1**).

Uses contextual strategies (grammar & word meanings) to identify words in texts (**Skill Set 1**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Two:* Nouns, Verbs, Attributes

*Stage Five:* Reading: Sounds (Rhyming words), Context

*Stage Seven:* Making Words: High Frequency Words

- Stage Two exposes the learner to language using illustrated short rhyming passages about familiar nouns such as animals and foods.
- Stage Five *Sounds* asks the learner to select rhyming word pairs from a word wall. *Context* assesses the learner's ability to select the appropriate high-frequency word to fill in a blank spot in a sentence.
- Stage Seven *High Frequency Words* asks the learner use context to complete photograph captions.

Uses the school or community library to locate topical information (may use supports - **Skill Sets 1, 3**).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

*Stage Five:* Reading: Letters (Alphabetizing)

- Alphabetization is a useful skill for locating research materials. Stage Five *Letters* consists of two alphabetizing activities. The activity on the easier level asks the learner to alphabetize based on first letter only. The more difficult activity asks the learner to alphabetize words to the second and third letter.